



### **A weekly question/answer column**

## **Is There Such A Thing As A Midlife Crisis In Marriage?**

*Glen O. Jenson\* answers:*

There are many physical, emotional and relationship-related changes that occur at about midlife time, which may start in the late 30s and continue well into the 60s. This is often thought of as a period of turmoil and adjustment, but the debate is still out as to whether it is a crisis.

Research literature terms this phase of life as a crisis when career-oriented persons come to a realization that they may never reach their career goals. Even those who have been successful occupationally may feel dissatisfied and wonder if it was all worth it. Women who have spent a majority of their married lives with children and household activities may wonder what their role is now.

Midlife also often comes with an increased need to provide care for the elderly. Women tend to view this as more of a crisis than men do because they will likely provide more of the care.

Midlife becomes a time when it is necessary to accept reality and learn to live with it, yet the increased health problems, worries and pressures can be difficult on a marriage. Once the adjustment has been made, however, marital satisfaction tends to increase for many couples. Some suggestions to enhance or hasten the adjustment brought on by midlife follow.

- The marriage relationship needs first priority. Earlier in life, children and careers often took first priority. It is important that husbands and wives reestablish their commitment and determination to make the marriage meaningful to both. Appreciation, understanding and support as well as meaningful time together become more important than ever.
- Role sharing may need to be adjusted to ensure an equal balance. The intimate aspect of the relationship may also require additional effort.
- A sense of humor is essential. Remember to laugh at yourself and your mate.

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